MARK TWAIN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE RELIGIOUS CONCEPT OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY IN "REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION," THE "NOTEBOOK," "LETTERS FROM THE EARTH," AND "WHAT IS MAN?"

By

SARAH IRENE BAIRD

Bachelor of Science

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

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Thesis Approved:

Clinton Keeler
Thesis Adviser

D. Gilbert Gilbert

Samuel H. Woods, Jr.

D. Durham
Dean of Graduate College

PREFACE

While engaging in class discussions on Mark Twain, I heard repeated several times that he was an atheist. The thought kept coming to me that a man who dwelt so much on religious topics and Bible stories could not be absolutely a disbeliever; surely there was a reason. Twain's greatest distinction is not as a "mere humorist" but as a satirist, and the purpose of satire in the end is to reform. Twain wrote to Howells in 1879: "I wish I could give those sharp satires on European life which you mention, but of course a man can't write successful satire except he be in a calm judicial good humor--." Twain, it seems to me, wanted some reform; he wanted Christians to re-think some of their traditional ideas about God. The satire of particularly Letters from the Earth and "Reflections on Religion" apparently fails because Twain was not "in a calm judicial good humor." Therefore, he is accused of bitter denunciation of God; whereas, in truth, he probably sought merely a re-interpretation of the orthodox God.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Mark Twain, a humorist who is really funny." Quite a unique image to protect. And Samuel Langhorne Clemens spent most of his life, and perhaps some of his afterlife, protecting that image. After all, he penned on the title pages of two of the chapters of "Reflections on Religion" that they were not to be exposed to any eye until the edition of A. D. 2406.[1] More seriously, he made that famous lecture tour to pay off his debts after his bankruptcy because he heartily agreed with Henry Huttleston Rogers that an author's only stock in trade is character. Twain seemed to take his public image more seriously than perhaps many American writers. Although he had an earnest desire to be accepted in literary circles, he also had a reputation as a "mere humorist" that must be preserved for the general public. This desire to protect his public image often led him to hide some of his most troubling thoughts, particularly some of those expressed in the last ten years of his writing.

In spite of the efforts of his daughter Clara to suppress manuscripts which she thought presented a distorted view of her father's ideas and attitudes, most of these late religious writings have been published today. Subsequently, Mark Twain has been denounced as an atheist and an infidel. Henry S. Canby pointed out that the publication of these manuscripts would serve only "to shock them [his public] morally, to disturb the religious--ethical code of America--the old-time religion in

which he grew up with daily doses from his mother--" and would be "to put it mildly, incompatible with popularity."[2] Bernard DeVoto estimated that in the last ten years of his life Twain wrote fifteen thousand pages, and Dwight MacDonald pointed out that this unpublished material is almost all of incomplete projects and that "He had lost his bearings as a craftsman, he had lost his faith in God and man, his mood was one of neurotic bitterness."[3] Of course, Twain's doubts concerning the Deity are well known and were noted even during his lifetime. William Dean Howells reported:

> In one of our walks about Hartford, when he was in the first fine flush of his agnosticism, he declared that Christianity had done nothing to improve morals and conditions, and that the world under the highest pagan civilization was as well off as it was under the highest Christian influences.[4]

Howells wrote that he offered abundant proofs that Twain was wrong, and "Later he [Twain] was more tolerant in his denials of Christianity, but just then was feeling his freedom from it, and rejoicing in having broken what he felt to be the shackles of belief worn too long."[5] Howells went on to point out Twain's admiration of Robert Ingersoll, an interest that other critics have noted as an important influence. Van Wyck Brooks noted that when Twain was working on Tom Sawyer, "he was writing to Robert Ingersoll, a letter that displayed a thirst for crude atheism comparable only to the thirst for crude alcohol of a man who has been too long deprived of his normal ration of simple beer."[6] Bernard DeVoto and Brooks both seem to insist on agnosticism as a facet of his pessimism which occurred in his later years. DeVoto pointed out that after his tragedies Twain wrote obsessively and was repeatedly frustrated, trying to understand what happened and what his choice and responsibility in it were, and "what relation might exist between personal tragedy and the

moral foundations of the universe."[7] DeVoto wrote that these bewildered gropings led to three things, What Is Man?, The Mysterious Stranger, and the Autobiography. They are all three, he asserted,

> . . . an interpretation of personal tragedy, a confession of guilt, a plea for understanding and pardon, a defiance of fate, and a judgment passed on mankind and its place in the universe. . . . They were produced by the climactic experiences of Mark's life and they represent, not a complete change certainly, for their elements were always in him though held in healthy equilibrium of his artistic success and personal happiness, but a new orientation of his personality and a new if minor expression of his genius.[8]

Justin Kaplan does not agree with DeVoto that Twain came out of his ordeal with his gift "whole" and that The Mysterious Stranger vindicated and solved the problems of those despairing manuscripts he could never complete. Kaplan stated that

> . . . to bring himself to write or dictate he relied on larger and larger doses of indignation directed against larger and larger objects: Mary Baker Eddy, King Leopold II, William Shakespeare, and God. . . . But he survived, and that, considering what he went through, is in itself something of a triumph.[9]

Dixon Wecter also pointed out that the drift was no new departure and that Twain was powerfully drawn to the agnosticism of Huxley, Haecknel, and Ingersoll. He stated further that

> As a boy he [Twain] had been terrorized by the fickle and vindictive Jehovah of Sunday schools; as a youth he graduated to the God of scientific law, impersonal but just; as an old man he returned to the cruel God, now stripped of anthropomorphic whims, but no less terrible as causation and fate.[10]

DeVoto also held that this God, the one in What Is Man?, is a vindictive God. E. S. Fussell, on the other hand, wrote, speaking of The Mysterious Stranger, that

> . . . in the last view, deity can hardly be either malignant or indifferent, for it is totally non-existent; nonetheless, the view of deity as evil is, one is supposed to believe, more

> consonant with the phenomena which the 'thought' (or individual) is able to apprehend than are traditional theological notions of God's attributes, and this level of illumination may then be taken as a partial 'enlightenment,' a limited intellectual progress.[11]

In examining the biographical facts and critical opinions, one would be inclined to agree with Wecter when he wrote that Twain inherited from his early biblical training "the will to disbelieve, but also a lifelong fascination with the mythology taught."[12] But, as Allison Ensor stated, "Twain could no more let go of Christianity than he could his desire to be respected and admired by the reading public."[13] Finally, one has to accept Kaplan's statement:

> As crudely suggested by the multiplex often warring identities of Samuel Clemens and Mark Twain, the man never did, in any definitive sense, achieve unity of personality or unity of statement about himself. And his biographers, having been in the past no more successful than he was, have, in a sense abandoned the attempt. Partly through the interplay of Brooks and DeVoto, partly through the study of letters and papers which Paine either ignored or was not permitted to see, partly through a more subtle and complex viewing of our past as a whole, we no longer try to force Mark Twain into the mold of the genial humorist and rough-hewn philosopher of his official biographies.[14]

While it is true that Twain's religious views were subject to change during his lifetime and that he rejected orthodox Christianity, he was, nonetheless, greatly interested in God and his relation to man. This interest in God is reflected particularly in some of his late writings such as "Reflections on Religion" and Letters from the Earth. In dealing with morality, one must consider three aspects: man's relation to others (or society), man's relation to self, and man's relation to God. If by morality one means only the first aspect, man's relation to others, everyone would grant that Twain was a highly moral man. His sense of obligation regarding bankruptcy debts, his idea of man's "common duty" of

helping one not able to help himself, and his attitude toward slavery are sufficient illustrations of this point. Certainly this first aspect of morality was easiest for Twain to deal with in his thinking; the second was difficult; the third was practically impossible.

In man's relation to self, Twain said ironically that man has a Moral Sense, but he also said that not only did man know Right from Wrong but that man possesses the singular and striking quality of always choosing the Wrong, a habit which made man lower than the other animals. This problem of the Moral Sense was treated in one chapter of "Reflections on Religion," but Twain excluded it from the final manuscript. The Moral Sense is treated ironically, however, in other writings, especially The Mysterious Stranger. Realizing that man knew Right from Wrong and was capable of choosing, Twain had a strong sense of responsibility regarding the suffering surrounding him and as a result developed strong feelings of guilt. Twain dealt with this problem of man's responsibility in his Socratic-like dialogue of What Is Man? But, the problem of conscience and the role it plays in a person's life always plagued Twain. Into this choice of Right or Wrong enters the problem of Free Will. The Christian grants that the price of Free Will (that man brings suffering and evil into the world) is worth paying. However, Twain could not bring himself to grant man's responsibility for the suffering in the world; he could not understand how a supposedly benevolent and loving God could consider the price worth paying. Twain felt the puppet world the better choice; in other words, he could not grant as the Christian does that the evil associated with free choice is infinitely better than joy and love that is not freely given. Therefore, in regard to man's relation to God, Twain settled for his "sweet gospel," the more comfortable position of

determinism, which he expounds in What Is Man? Along with his "gospel," then, he had to characterize God as a Being other than the one recognized by Christians. This Being is the one described as the "real God" in "Reflections on Religion" and in the Notebook. Because he could not resolve the conflicts of these two aspects of morality, Twain settled on a "religion" based primarily on the first aspect of morality; his religion was one which centered on service and humanity to man; in his late writings he chose, for the most part, to ignore the role of the Supreme Being, though not to deny His existence. Twain believed, as Phillip Sheldon Foner pointed out, that

> Realism should be the foundation on which to build a real religion, [quoting Twain] 'having for its base God and Man as they are, and not as the elaborately masked and disguised artificialities they are represented to be in most philosophies and in all religions'.[15]

END NOTES

[1]Charles Neider, ed., "Mark Twain: Reflections on Religion," Hudson Review, XVI, iii (Autumn, 1963), 331.

[2]Turn West, Turn East: Mark Twain and Henry James (Boston, 1951), p. 243.

[3]"Mark Twain: An Unsentimental Journey," The New Yorker, XXXVI, viii (April 9, 1960), 166.

[4]My Mark Twain: Reminiscences and Criticisms (New York, 1910), p. 31.

[5]Ibid.

[6]The Ordeal of Mark Twain (New York, 1955), p. 228.

[7]Bernard DeVoto, ed., Mark Twain in Eruption (New York, 1940), p.xx.

[8]Ibid., p. xxi.

[9]Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain (New York, 1966), p. 348.

[10]"Mark Twain," Literary History of the United States, rev. ed., ed. Robert E. Spiller, et al. (New York, 1955), p. 937.

[11]"The Structural Problems of 'The Mysterious Stranger'," Studies in Philology, XLIX (Jan., 1952), 100.

[12]Dixon Wecter, ed., Report from Paradise by Mark Twain (New York, 1952), p. xiii.

[13]Mark Twain and the Bible (Lexington, 1969), p. 95.

[14]Justin Kaplan, ed., Mark Twain: A Profile (New York, 1957), p. xv.

[15]Mark Twain: Social Critic (New York, 1958), p. 153. The source of the quotation is not shown by Foner.

CHAPTER II

INFLUENCES ON TWAIN'S THOUGHT

In the development of Twain's religious beliefs, critics place much emphasis on the influence of his early religious training in Hannibal. Though the emphasis seems to be on the Calvinistic household and atmosphere, it is a fact that John Clemens was a free thinker and Jane Clemens was never one whose life was centered on the church. Because Twain said that his father never spoke on religious matters, the possible influence of John Clemens is usually ignored. Even though Twain did not enjoy an intimate relationship with his father, it certainly seems that he would have been aware of his father's religious feelings. Minnie M. Brashear has conjectured that Mark Twain's father had probably acquired an interest in Voltaire and Thomas Paine and that his son might have caught from him hints that motivated his later reading.[1] Furthermore, other of Twain's kinsmen were known to hold heterodox views. His uncle, John Quarles, was unable to accept the Calvinistic concept regarding human destiny and, therefore, became a Universalist, a faith that taught that all mankind would be saved and righteousness is the controlling power of the universe, a very unpopular view around Hannibal. Not much is known of Orion's religious views, but he frequently printed anecdotes expressing Deistic thoughts in his newspapers. Finally, the familiar assumption concerning the grim Calvinism of Jane Clemens should be questioned. Twain's description of his mother when he refers to her does not make her

appear to be a person who spent her time warning her son about the torments of hell or preaching the darker aspects of Calvinism. He speaks of her kind-heartedness and compassion and even reports, "It was believed that, Presbyterian as she was, she could be beguiled into saying a soft word for the devil himself."[2] It even seems that Jane Clemens was somewhat liberal for her day. Her granddaughter, who lived with her for twenty-five years, does not recall that "she ever referred to the retribution of a stern Calvinistic God, or similar subjects."[3] And she further reported that Jane Clemens went to church only now and then. While it is true that "she subscribed in general to the Presbyterian dogma, her creed was hardly 'clear cut' in its orthodoxy."[4] While it would be impossible to say Twain was not affected by the Calvinistic atmosphere of Hannibal and the professed faith of his mother, it does seem that perhaps the effects of Twain's early religious training may have been overemphasized.

After rejecting the Calvinistic orthodoxy, Twain began courting Olivia Langdon who subscribed to the Congregationalist doctrine, the theology of which was generally Calvinistic like that of most nineteenth century Protestant denominations. Olivia was going to assist him in finding his way back to the fold.

> During his courtship of Livy, Twain became much like the Prodigal. Having strayed into the 'far country' of religious skepticism, he now made a valiant effort to return to the orthodox religious faith which Livy held, and his letters are filled with expressions of this attempt.[5]

However, as Wecter pointed out, Twain had probably just devised a "lover's gambit." As Kaplan stated it,

> He kissed by the Book, he knew that he had to reach the altar by way of the amen corner. In the exuberance of his formal engagement to Livy in February 1869 he explained his strategy

> to his mother: 'She said she never would or could love me--but she set herself the task of making a Christian of me. I said she would succeed, but that in the meantime she would unwittingly dig a matrimonial pit and end by tumbling into it--and lo! the prophecy is fulfilled.'[6]

Twain courted her by offering to let her make over his character, and less than a year after their marriage he joked, "I would deprive myself of sugar in my coffee if she wished it, or quit wearing socks if she thought them immoral."[7] During his courtship and the first years of marriage he was probably as close as he would ever be to orthodox belief. During the first year of marriage, he did try to practice the forms of religion. He joined in family prayer and Bible readings. "After all, what does tobacco matter," he could jest, "Let's have another chapter of Deuteronomy."[8] But, he finally gave up altogether by telling Olivia, according to Paine,

> Livy, you may keep this up if you want to, but I must ask you to excuse me from it. It is making me a hypocrite. I don't believe in this Bible. It contradicts my reason. I can't sit here and listen to it, letting you believe that I regard it, as you do, in the light of gospel, the word of God.[9]

In the end, it seems that Olivia was the one that was converted. Wecter stated that "Twain's vitality rescued her from abysses of timorous living, his banter relaxed her serious disposition, and his religious skepticism destroyed her Christian faith."[10] She wrote to Twain less than two years after their marriage "that she had fallen away from God, adding that if she could only feel toward God what she felt toward her husband she would feel no anxiety whatever about religion."[11] Howells reported that Twain

> . . . did tell me, after they both ceased to go [regularly to church] , that she had finally come to him saying 'Well, if you are to be lost, I want to be lost with you.' He could accept that willingness for supreme sacrifice and exult in it because of the supreme truth as he saw it. After they had

> both ceased to be formal Christians, she was still grieved by his denial of immortality, so grieved that he resolved upon one of those heroic lies, which for love's sake he held above even the truth, and he went to her, saying that he had been thinking the whole matter over, and now he was convinced that they would live after death. It was too late.[12]

Twain had long before undermined her religious faith, and she had ceased to believe in a personal God.

Another influence on Twain's religious views which is frequently ignored is that he was a member of the Ancient, Free, and Accepted Order of Masons, affiliated with Polar Star Lodge Number 79 of St. Louis. His progress in the order was rapid, and he became a Master Mason only four months after joining the order. Twain's interest in Freemasonry is reflected in The Innocents Abroad.[13] His interest in Masonic lore was at its peak when he was in Lebanon, musing that "all around us are what were once the dominions of Hiram, King of Tyre, who furnished timber from the cedars of these Lebanon hills to build portions of King Solomon's Temple with."[14] From this spot Twain obtained a piece of cedar wood which he had fashioned into a gavel, and sent to the Worshipful Master of his lodge. During this time that Twain most frequently thought of himself as Brother Clemens, his work reveals the influence of Masonic studies. Perhaps the most interesting passage deals with "the plain old sword of that stout Crusader, Godfrey of Bouillon." To Twain, this sword was "more significant than the Pillar of Flagellation, the Stone of Unction, the Holy Sepulcher itself, or even 'the niche where they used to preserve a piece of the True Cross'."[15] His description of and fascination with the sword alludes to the Masonic belief that both Solomon and Godfrey were members of the order. In other passages of The Innocents Abroad Twain borrows phrases from the lodge ritual such as "in due and ancient form,"

the "great Architect of the Universe," and "the dews of Hermon." At the tomb of Adam, he echoes the funeral service of the Grand Lodge of Missouri when he recites, "But let us try to bear it [Adam's death] with fortitude. Let us trust that he is better off where he is. Let us take comfort in the thought that his loss is our eternal gain."[16] Finally, in describing a view above the Sea of Galilee, Twain dwells at length on one portion of the scene:

> And down toward the southeast lay a landscape that suggested to my mind a quotation (imperfectly remembered, no doubt);
>
> The Ephraimites, not being called upon to share in the rich spoils of the Ammonitish Jeptha [sic] , Judge of Israel; who being apprised of their approach, gathered together the men of Israel and gave them battle and put them to flight. To make his victory the more secure, he stationed guards at the different fords and passages of the Jordan, with instructions to let none pass who could not say Shibboleth. The Ephraimites, being of a different tribe, could not frame to pronounce the word aright, but called it Sibboleth, which proved them enemies and cost them their lives; wherefore forty and two thousand fell at the different fords and passages of the Jordan that day.[17]

Jones pointed out that any Mason

> might overlook the shorter quotations, but he could hardly miss this one. Furthermore, unlike several of the other echoes of Masonic ritual, this borrowing has no humorous overtones; it is merely 'Bro. Clemens' indicating his presence in a book written by 'Mark Twain'.[18]

However, it should be pointed out that these passages are also in the Old Testament. Ensor has asserted that

> Although he rejected orthodoxy early in life and nearly always classifies himself a 'sinner,' he nevertheless maintained to the end a great interest in all things having to do with Christianity. Clearly this was so because of the powerful hold which the fundamentalism of his early environment had on his imagination--a hold which John Marshall Clemens, John Quarles, Thomas Paine, and Freemasonry, and Robert Ingersoll could not break.[19]

It does seem though that two sides of Twain's nature are apparent: the one inherited from the fundamentalism of Jane Clemens and the other from the heterodoxy of John Clemens, John Quarles, Robert Ingersoll, and Freemasonry.

END NOTES

[1]Phillip Sheldon Foner, Mark Twain: Social Critic (New York, 1958), p. 125.

[2]Mark Twain, Mark Twain's Autobiography, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York, 1924), I, 116-117.

[3]Foner, p. 127.

[4]Ibid., p. 128.

[5]Ensor, p. 37.

[6]Kaplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain, p. 81.

[7]Ibid., p. 80.

[8]Ibid., pp. 118-119.

[9]Quoted in Ensor, p. 39.

[10]Wecter, "Mark Twain," p. 925.

[11]James M. Cox, "The Muse of Samuel Clemens," The Massachusetts Review, V, i (Autumn, 1963), 135.

[12]Howells, p. 32.

[13]For all my information about Mark Twain and Freemasonry I am indebted to Alexander E. Jones, "Mark Twain and Freemasonry," American Literature, XXVI (1954), 363-373.

[14]Quoted in Jones, "Freemasonry," p. 365.

[15]Ibid., p. 367.

[16]The Missouri "Service at the Grave" proclaims, "we can do nothing more of a material nature for our departed Brother. Let us cherish his memory in the abiding faith that our temporary loss is his eternal gain." Quoted in Jones, "Freemasonry," p. 368.

[17]The passage in the Masonic ritual for the Fellow Craft degree according to Malcolm C. Duncan (Revised Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor, Danburg, Conn., n.d., p. 14) is actually as follows: "The Ephraimities, being highly incensed for not being called to fight, and share in the rich spoils of the Ammonitish war, assembled a mighty army, and passed over the river Jordan to give Jephthah battle; but he, being apprised of their approach, called together the men of Gilead, and gave them battle, and put them to flight; and to make his victory more complete, he ordered guards to be placed on the different passes on the banks of the river Jordan, and commanded, if the Ephraimities passed that way, Say ye Shibboleth; but they, pronounced it Sibboleth; which trifling defect proved them to be spies and cost them their lives; and there fell at that time, at the different passes on the banks of the river Jordan, forty and two thousand." Quoted in Jones, "Freemasonry," p. 368.

[18]Jones, "Freemasonry," p. 369.

[19]Ensor, p. 95.

CHAPTER III

ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOD AND THE BIBLE

In the later development of Mark Twain's religious beliefs, there seem to be three characteristics which stand out: the first is the conviction that religious creeds, particularly the Bible, are human in origin; the second is that the traditional God does not deserve man's reverence or gratitude; and the third is that the "real God" merits man's veneration. Even though these ideas are expressed in several of Twain's writings, five chapters dictated in June of 1906 will serve primarily to illustrate the substance of his thought. The chapters, published by Charles Neider in 1963 under the title "Reflections on Religion," were suppressed until that time. The refusal to print them was unexplained by Paine, although he does quote from them in his Mark Twain: A Biography. DeVoto did not print them upon the request of Twain's daughter Clara. When Neider first asked to publish them in 1959, Mrs. Clara Samossoud said that no good could come of it and that to publish them would give aid and comfort to the anti-religious Soviet Union. (Neider suspects that the real reason was that Mrs. Samassoud was Christian Scientist; she was old and in poor health, and her husband feared a deluge of mail.) Neider divorced himself from the responsibility of not printing them; but, nonetheless, the Literary Gazette of Moscow accused him of willfully censoring Twain and reported that Twain was officially censored in his own country. After several more appeals, Neider convinced Mrs.

Samassoud that the censorship was providing the very aid she hoped to avoid, and she consented to their publication in 1960, even going so far as to lift the ban on all her father's unpublished works. For minor reasons Neider did not publish these five chapters until 1963 when they appeared in the Hudson Review.

The chapters were dictated by Twain in Dublin, New Hampshire, two years after the death of his wife and during the same time he was dictating his autobiography. He wrote Howells on June 17, 1906:

> Tomorrow I mean to dictate a chapter that will get my heirs & assigns burnt alive if they venture to print it this side of 2006 A. D.--which I judge they won't. There'll be lots of chapters if I live 3 or 4 years longer. The edition of A. D. 2006 will make a stir when it come out. I shall be hovering around taking notice, along with other dead pals. You are invited.[1]

On June 26 he was in New York for business reasons, and he wrote Howells again,

> I have been dictating some fearful things, for 4 successive mornings--for no eye but yours to see until I have been dead a century--if then. But I got them out of my system, where they have been festering for years--& that was the main thing. I feel better now.[2]

Chapter Two of "Reflections on Religion" shows Twain's attitude toward religious creeds. He points out that the Bible has two defects: first, it has a "pathetic poverty of invention" and second, it "pretends to originality without possessing any."[3] He comments that each Bible borrows from other Bibles without giving credit, and this kind of plagiarism is a distinctly immoral act. He says that the Golden Rule, the Flood, and the Immaculate Conception are favorite borrowings. He says that this defective Bible of Christians tells of a virgin birth. (It should be noted that Twain always confused the Immaculate Conception with the Virgin Birth.) This virgin birth should be rejected, according to

Twain, since the only evidence is human testimony, testimony not given by a disinterested party. He writes:

> The Immaculate Conception rests wholly upon the testimony of a single witness--a witness whose testimony is without value--a witness whose very existence has nothing to rest upon but the assertion of the young peasant wife whose husband needed to be pacified.[4]

And, he concludes that a religion requiring morality began in immorality by a violation of human and divine laws, a promiscuous relationship between a god and a peasant. Twain's objections to the story of Noah and the Ark appear at the beginning of "Adam's Soliloquy" (1905). Twain's point is that if the Bible is really true and if the dinosaur Adam was observing in the museum also existed, then something like Noah's version of the story must have been correct. Noah reported that there really was some excuse for leaving some of the animals behind:

> (1) it was manifest that some time or other they would be needed as fossils for museums and (2) there had been a miscalculation, the Ark was smaller than it should have been, and so there wasn't room for those creatures.[5]

Noah concludes, after explaining that they had no pump and only one window through which to let down a bucket a good fifty feet,

> As it was, we lost many animals--choice animals that would have been valuable in menageries. . . . But we never lost a locust, nor a grasshopper, nor a weevil, nor a rat, nor a cholera germ, nor any of that sort of beings. On the whole, I think we did very well, everything considered.[6]

The indictment seems to be against either the laughable illogic of man's view of God for not destroying the harmful creatures and saving the useful or else the Bible is wrong as scientific history.

In Letters from the Earth (1909) Twain attacks the Bible with a vehemence not found in most of his writings. He found particularly

ridiculous the conceptions of heaven presented in the Bible. Satan writes to St. Michael and St. Gabriel:

> His heaven is like himself: strange, interesting, astonishing, grotesque. I give you my word, it has not a single feature in it that he actually values. It consists--utterly and entirely--out of diversions which he cares next to nothing about, here in the earth, yet is quite sure he will like it in heaven. . . . the human being, like the immortals, naturally places sexual intercourse far and away above other joys. . . . it is not in their heaven; prayer takes its place. . . . Most men do not sing, most men cannot sing, most men will not stay where others are singing if it be continued more than two hours. . . . In man's heaven everybody sings! . . . This universal singing is not casual, not occasional, not relieved by intervals of quiet; it goes on all day long, and every day, during a stretch of twelve hours.[7]

He further explains that about two men in a hundred can play a musical instrument, yet all will play harps in heaven; many men pray but not many like it, yet they will like it in heaven; all nations despise other nations, yet every pious person wants to go to heaven where he will love all "brothers."

Allison Ensor has summarized the faults of the Bible according to Twain and pointed out that, "Twain was never the kind of person who stops with saying that the Bible is being wrongly used or misinterpreted. To him the book itself deserved harsh criticism."[8] The list of faults can be summarized as follows:

1. The Bible is not true.
2. The Bible is contrary to the laws of nature.
3. The Bible lacks originality.
4. The Bible has had a pernicious influence on mankind.
5. The Bible is obscene.
6. The Bible presents a petty and cruel God.
7. The Bible has created a hell.

8. The Bible is inconsistent in that the moralities of the New Testament do not match the conduct of God in the Old Testament.[9]

Satan's description of the Bible in Letters from the Earth perhaps expresses Twain's attitude toward the Bible as well as any. "It is full of interest. It has noble poetry in it; and some clever fables; and some blood-drenched history; and some good morals; and a wealth of obscenity; and upwards of a thousand lies."[10]

Another characteristic of the Bible and orthodox Christianity that Twain objected to was the concept of God. Chapter One of "Reflections on Religion" begins:

> Our Bible reveals to us the character of our God with minute and remorseless exactness. The portrait is substantially that of a man. . . . In the Old Testament His acts expose his vindictive, unjust, ungenerous, pitiless, and vengeful nature with thousandfold severity; punishing innocent children for the misdeeds of their parents; punishing unoffending populations for the misdeeds of their rulers; even descending to wreak bloody vengeance upon harmless calves and lambs and sheep and bullocks as punishment for inconsequential trespasses committed by their proprietors.[11]

Twain was particularly outraged by the pettiness of the Bible God and horrified by the cruelties ascribed to him. For example, Twain notes that,

> The best minds will tell you that when a man has begotten a child he is morally bound to tenderly care for it, protect it from hurt, shield it from disease, clothe it, feed it, bear with its waywardness, lay not hand upon it save in kindness and for his own good, and never in any case inflict on it wanton cruelty.[12]

Yet, "God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden and eventually assassinated them. All for disobeying a command which he had no right to utter."[13] Twain feels that God had no right to utter such a command because it was totally incomprehensible to man. Satan tells in "That Day

in Eden" (1904) how he tried to explain Good, Evil and Death to Adam and Eve. When Eve could not understand fear, Satan replied, "Naturally. Why should you? You have not felt it, you cannot feel it, it does not belong in your world." And he finally concluded,

> It was a hopeless case. Words referring to things outside of her experience were a foreign language to her, and meaningless. She was like a little baby whose mother says to it, 'Don't put your finger in the candle flame; it will burn you.' Burn--it is a foreign word to the baby, and will have no terrors for it until experience shall have revealed its meaning.[14]

Nevertheless,

> It was decreed that all of Adam's descendants, to the latest day, should be punished for the baby's trespass against a law of his nursery fulminated against him before he was out of his diapers. For thousands and thousands of years his posterity, individual by individual, has been unceasingly hunted and harried with afflictions in punishment of the juvenile misdemeanor which is grandiloquently called Adam's Sin.[15]

The inference that the punishment was unjust and unfair and that the greatest injustice was to punish all mankind in general is readily apparent.

Twain further denounced the Bible God for making pets of a chosen few and for being a God small in character. He says that man has a confusion of notions concerning this God. "We divide Him in two, bring half of Him down to an obscure and infinitesimal corner of the world to confer salvation upon a little colony of Jews--and only Jews, no one else--and leave the other half of Him throned in heaven. . . ."[16] This seems to Twain to be a rather small God. He sets forth this idea of the limited view of the Deity in "Aix, the Paradise of the Rheumatics" (1891):

> the Deity's possessions consisted of a small sky freckled with mustard-seed stars, and under it a patch of landed estate not so big as the holdings of the Tsar today, and all His time was taken up in trying to keep a handful of Jews in some sort of order.[17]

In reference to the Scripture which says God is a jealous God, Twain asserts that it was simply another way of saying, "I the Lord thy God am a small God; a small God, and fretful about small things."[18]

Twain goes on in "Aix, the Paradise of the Rheumatics" to take the Christian world to task for not changing its interpretation of the Deity. He says that the advance of nations has brought changes that have freed the Deity "from a hundred fretting chains" and in time He will be freed from the rest. However, Twain notes, "It was without doubt, a mistake and a step backward when the Presbyterian Synods of America lately decided by vote, to leave Him still embarrassed with the dogma of infant damnation."[19] An entire article "Bible Teaching and Religious Practice" (1905) deals with this same problem of the church being slow to change its interpretations of the Deity and of the Bible. But in this piece the attack is against the church, not so much the Bible or God. It does conclude, however, with this thought: "It does certainly seem to suggest that if man continues in the direction of enlightenment, his religious practice may, in the end, attain some semblance of human decency."[20]

The confusion of notions about the Deity concerns this attempt to make God two different personages. Twain writes that while he is in heaven people believe God to be "stern, hard, resentful, jealous and cruel; but that when he came down to earth and assumed the name Jesus Christ, he became the opposite of what he was before."[21] Man believes the earthly half to be "just, merciful, charitable, benevolent, forgiving and full of sympathy for the sufferings of mankind and anxious to remove them."[22] This defies Twain's understanding. Not only is the idea inconceivable to Twain but also the idea is not compatible with Scripture.

One might suppose that the earthly half is a great deal better than the heavenly half, but such is not the case for Twain. He thought that not only could the harsh, cruel characteristics not disappear from God's nature but that there was nothing loving about a person who could devise and proclaim hell; this person invented "a lake of fire and brimstone in which all of us who fail to recognize and worship Him as God are to be burned through all eternity."[23] Twain thought that whereas the Old Testament God was a fearful and repulsive character, he was at least consistent. Not only that, "The first time the Deity came down to earth, he brought life and death; when he came the second time, he brought hell."[24] Twain has written enough about the release and comfort that death affords, that one is inclined to think that Twain would think that the first time the Deity came he brought a blessing.

The third chapter of "Reflections on Religion" deals briefly with the idea that the Bible defiles children and that the Christian religion and its God will pass on as have other religions in the past.

The fourth chapter then begins:

> Let us now consider the real God, the genuine God, the great God, the sublime and supreme God, the authentic Creator of the <u>real</u> universe, whose remotenesses are visited by comets only--comets unto which incredibly distant Neptune is merely and outpost, a Sandy Hook to homeward-bound spectres of the deeps of space that have not glimpsed it before for generations--a universe not made with hands and suited to an astronomical nursery, but spread abroad through the illimitable reaches of space by the fiat of the real God just mentioned; that God of unthinkable grandeur and majesty, by comparison with whom all the other gods whose myriads infest the feeble imaginations of men are a swarm of gnats scattered and lost in the infinitudes of the empty sky.[25]

Twain has in other places implied the difference between the Bible God and the real God. <u>Letters from the Earth</u> begins with the Creator sitting

upon the throne thinking, and when He finished thinking, He created the "real universe."

> He lifted his hand, and from it burst a fountain-spray of fire, a million stupendous suns, which clove the blackness and soared, away and away and away, diminishing in magnitude and intensity as they pierced the far frontiers of Space, until at last they were but as diamond nailheads sparkling under the domed vast roof of the universe.[26]

Satan, who observed this creation and should understand the nature of the Creator, wrote in utter astonishment about man's God: "It is God!" and then corrected himself, "This race's God, I mean"[27] who not only endures but likes and requires the praise service that is to be offered continually in heaven. In another letter Satan remarks that, "It is most difficult to understand the disposition of the Bible God."[28]

Twain has before denounced the vindictive Bible God but apparently this dictation of "Reflections on Religion" and some notations in his Notebook (May, 1898) are the only times he confesses that there is another God. The "real God" is described in terms of grandeur and majesty; this God is of a magnitude which is beyond human imagination and cannot be associated with "anything trivial, anything lacking dignity, anything lacking grandeur."[29] In his Notebook Twain wrote that the Being which to him is the "real God" is the one who created the majestic universe.

> He is the perfect artisan, the perfect artist. Everything which He has made is fine, everything which he has made is beautiful; nothing coarse, nothing ugly has ever come from His hand. The materials of the leaf, the flower, the fruit; of the insect, the elephant, the man; of the forest and the ice--may be reduced to infinitesimal particles and they are still delicate, still faultless.[30]

Twain goes on to contrast the "real God" with the Bible God when he writes:

> This is indeed a God! He is not jealous, trivial, ignorant, revengeful--it is impossible. He has personal dignity--dignity

> answerable to his grandeur, his greatness, his might, his sublimity. . . . The shadow does not go back on His dial--it is against his law; His sun does not stand still on Gibeon to accomodate a worm out on a raid against other worms--it is against His law.[31]

The law of this "real God" is the Law of Nature. This God also created the eternal laws of Nature, and there is no detail of the universe "that is not the slave of a system of exact and inflexible law."[32] Furthermore, this magnificent God who set the laws of Nature in motion hears no pleas by man for any changes. He has no interest in man or animals and cares nothing for their suffering. The Law for the Distribution of Comfort and Pain shows an entire lack of sentimental justice. "He made it an unchanging law that that creature should suffer wanton and unnecessary pains and miseries every day of his life."[33] By this reasoning the "real God" seems to be responsible for the evils that beset mankind, and one wonders exactly what made this "genuine God" any more appealing than the Bible God. Rather than being revengeful, the "real God" seems to be merely indifferent, and this seems a more comfortable position for Twain.

Although this "real God" seems to be destitute of the qualities which would command respect and reverence and worship, he does seem to merit man's veneration simply as the magnificent Creator of the Universe. After describing the "perfect artisan," Twain concludes,

> whether he makes a gnat, a bird, a horse, a plain, a forest, a mountain range, a planet, a constellation, or a diatom whose form the keenest eye in the world cannot perceive, it is all one--He makes it utterly and minutely perfect in form and construction. The diatom which is invisible to the eye on the point of a needly is graceful and beautiful in form and in the minute exquisite elaboration of its parts, it is a wonder. The contemplation of it moves one to something of the same awe and reverence which the march of the comets through their billion mile orbits compels.[34]

And if this "real God is the same God as the one mentioned in What Is Man? he again merits man's veneration because the Old Man leads the Young Man to admit that all credit and glory for virtues such as charity, benevolence, magnanimity, kindliness and such go to God since he is the Originator of all things.

END NOTES

[1]Mark Twain, "Mark Twain: Reflections on Religion," ed. Charles Neider, Hudson Review, XVI, iii (Autumn, 1963), 331; hereafter cited as "Reflections."

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 332.

[4]Ibid., p. 337.

[5]Mark Twain, "Adam's Soliloquy," Europe and Elsewhere, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York, 1923), p. 378.

[6]Ibid., p. 379.

[7]Mark Twain, Letters from the Earth, ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York, 1963), pp. 16-17; hereafter cited as Letters from the Earth.

[8]Ensor, p. 80.

[9]Summarized from Ensor, pp. 80-88.

[10]Letters from the Earth, p. 20.

[11]"Reflections," p. 332. Compare this to the Masonic concept of the Deity expounded by Albert Pike (Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Charleston, S. C., 1871, p. 161.): "The Deity of the Old Testament is everywhere represented as the direct author of Evil, commissioning evil and lying spirits to men, hardening the heart of Pharoah, and visiting the iniquity of the individual sinner on the whole people. The rude conception of sternness predominating over mercy in the Deity, can alone account for the human sacrifices proposed, if not executed by Abraham and Jephthath." Quoted in Jones, "Freemasonry," p. 371. Jones does not indicate the specific part of the Masonic ritual being referred to.

[12]Letters from the Earth, pp. 24-25.

[13]Ibid., p. 25.

[14]Mark Twain, "That Day in Eden," Europe and Elsewhere, pp. 341-342.

[15]"Reflections," pp. 332-333.

[16]Ibid., p. 333.

[17]Mark Twain, "Aix, the Paradise of the Rheumatics," Europe and Elsewhere, p. 97; hereafter cited as "Aix, the Paradise of the Rheumatics."

[18]Letters from the Earth, p. 31.

[19]"Aix, the Paradise of the Rheumatics," p. 98.

[20]Mark Twain, "Bible Teaching and Religious Practice," Europe and Elsewhere, p. 393.

[21]Letters from the Earth, p. 46.

[22]"Reflections," p. 333.

[23]Ibid., pp. 333-334.

[24]Letters from the Earth, p. 46.

[25]"Reflections," p. 343.

[26]Letters from the Earth, p. 11.

[27]Ibid., p. 18.

[28]Ibid., p. 31.

[29]"Reflections," p. 343.

[30]Mark Twain, Mark Twain's Notebook, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York, 1935), p. 361.

[31]Ibid., p. 362.

[32]"Reflections," p. 344.

[33]Ibid., p. 346.

[34]Notebook, p. 361. Compare this passage beginning with "he is the perfect artisan, the perfect artist," and concluding with the passage just noted to the Masonic teaching according to Pike: "Algebra applies to the clouds; the radiance of the stars benefits the rose; no thinker would dare to say that the perfume of the hawthorn is useless to the constellations. Who, then, can calculate the path of the molecule? How do we know that the creations of the world are not determined by the fall of grains of sand? Who then, understands the reciprocal flow and ebb of the infinitely small . . . . A flesh-worm is of account; the small is great; the great is small; all is in equilibrium in necessity. There are marvelous relatives between beings and things; in this inexhaustible whole, from sun to grub, there is no scorn; all need each other . . . . Every bird which flies has the thread of the Infinite in its claw . . . . where the telescope ends the microscope begins. Which of them the grander view? A bit of mould is a Pleiad of flowers--a nebula is an ant-hill of stars." Quoted in Jones, "Freemasonry," pp. 371-372. Jones does not indicate the specific passage of the Masonic ritual being referred to.

CHAPTER IV

DETERMINISM

The fifth chapter of "Reflections on Religion" ends the dictation with Twain's belief in determinism. The most explicit statement of his "gospel" is in What Is Man? (1906). In explaining how Twain came to write this essay, DeVoto said that an artist is "under an imperative obligation, a psychological necessity, to deal with the catastrophes that shattered him."[1] Twain wrote incessantly after he lost his fortune and suffered personal griefs. On January 22, 1898, after the death of Susy, he wrote to Howells, "I couldn't get along without my work now. I bury myself in it up to my ears. Long hours--8 and 9 on a stretch, sometimes."[2] He did write obsessively and the works that he created are obviously pleas for pardon. One is inclined to agree with DeVoto when he wrote: "No one, I think, can read this wearisomely repeated argument [of What Is Man?] without feeling the terrible force of an inner cry: Do not blame me, for it was not my fault."[3] However, a close analysis of DeVoto's idea, that What Is Man?, along with The Mysterious Stranger and the Autobiography, is an interpretation of his personal tragedy and a new orientation of his personality, seems doubtful. Mark Twain's ideas of determinism were present long before his bankruptcy and other losses. As others have indicated and DeLancy Ferguson has said, Twain's "gospel" sprang "from sources deeper than bankruptcy and bereavement."[4]

Twain wrote in a letter dated September 4, 1907, that he had considered publishing What Is Man? several times during the past eight or nine years, but the venture was not made for

> according to my gospel, as set forth in that small book, where there are two desires in a man's heart he has no choice between the two but must obey the strongest, there being no such thing as free will in the composition of any human being that ever lived.[5]

Concerning the completion and publication of What Is Man?, Twain went on to say in his letter that he had read the copy to Frank N. Doubleday in Vienna and Doubleday wanted to publish it. Twain, however, was not ready to submit it to print and criticism; he "added a paragraph or a chapter now and then, as time went by, and at last in 1902 I finished it; and I further finished it in 1904 by destroying the concluding chapter, whose subject was 'The Moral Sense'."[6] The deleted chapter was not destroyed but still exists today. Jones said,

> It is characterized by a mood of pessimism that sometimes approaches misanthropy; mankind, argues Twain, has the unique ability to distinguish right from wrong--all the better to choose the wrong. It is in this discussion of the moral sense that he comes closest to the pessimism of The Mysterious Stranger.[7]

Twain realized this chapter was inconsistent with the work, his "gospel," and wrote, "The fact is, I couldn't even stand the chapter myself; all the other chapters were sweet and gentle."[8]

As Twain indicated, he had talked his "gospel" rather freely, presenting it publicly for the first time probably in the 1880's to the Monday Evening Club, but his theory matured slowly in his mind, and "the work weaves the strands of his religious and philosophical speculation into a comparatively unified fabric."[9]

This small book which preaches Twain's "gospel" denies any personal merit. Man is a machine functioning automatically without God's help or the necessity of it. "It is merely a machine; and it works automatically, not by will-power. It has no command over itself, its owner has no command over it."[10] When the Old Man has convinced the Young Man that men are machines, he exclaims:

> Young Man: And so we are mere machines! And machines may not boast, nor feel proud of their performance, nor claim personal merit for it, nor applause and praise. It is an infamous doctrine.
>
> Old Man: It isn't a doctrine, it is merely a fact (p. 9).

Incidentally, the same idea is expressed in Letters from the Earth when Satan writes,

> The human being is a machine. An automatic machine. It is composed of thousands of complex and delicate mechanisms, which perform their functions harmoniously and perfectly, in accordance with laws devised for their governance, and over which the man himself has no authority, no mastership, no control.[11]

One cannot help noting the similarity between this description of man and the description of the universe. Both are functioning because they were created flawlessly and are governed by natural law.

Furthermore, this human machine gets all its inspirations from outside since it is not capable of originating an idea.

> Whatever a man is, is due to his make, and to the influences brought to bear upon it by his heredities, his habitat, his associations. He is moved, directed, COMMANDED by exterior influences--solely. He originates nothing, not even a thought (p. 5).

Speaking of the creative writer, and one wonders how Twain could find comfort in such a thought, the Old Man says, "he [Shakespeare] exactly portrayed people whom God had created; but he created none himself" (p. 8).[12]

Finally, no man does his duty for duty's sake but for personal satisfaction or for avoiding personal discomfort. When the Young Man asks what "the sole impulse that ever moves a person to do a thing" is, the Old Man replies, "The impulse to content his own spirit--the necessity of contenting his own spirit and winning its approval." And when asked to put this law into words, the Old Man states: "From his cradle to his grave a man never does a single thing which has any FIRST AND FOREMOST object but one--to secure peace of mind, spiritual comfort, for HIMSELF" (p. 15). When the Young Man inquires whether or not there is not some act, large or small, fine or mean, which springs from any other motive, the Old Man says there is not. As already indicated, Twain omitted the chapter on the moral sense, but he does seem to acknowledge its existence. However, in speaking of will, the Old Man says,

> It has nothing to do with intellectual perceptions of right and wrong, and it is not under their command. David's temperament and training had Will, and it was a compulsory force; David had to obey its decrees, he had no choice (p. 93).

The Old Man explains that he would not use the words Free Will but Free Choice, the difference being that "the one implies untrammeled power to act as you please, the other implies nothing beyond mere mental process: the critical ability to determine which of two things is nearest right and just" (pp. 90-91).

Likewise, if there is no free will, there will be no self-sacrifice. This "gospel" seems to take all dignity away from man. Indeed the Young Man said that the Old Man had degraded man, made him a humbug. He continues:

> Look at the matter as it stands now. Man has been taught that he is the supreme marvel of the Creation . . . . This had made his heart buoyant, his life cheery. His pride in himself, his sincere admiration of himself . . . these have all exalted him,

> enthused him, ambitioned him to higher and higher flights; in a word, made his life worth living. But by your scheme, all this is abolished; he is degraded to a machine, he is nobody . . . . He would never be cheerful again . . . (p. 105).

But, the Old Man simply responds that he believes these things and they have never made him unhappy, and the reason is temperament.

Since his "religion" was based primarily on man's relation to others, Twain's religious beliefs were centered on service and humanity to man. A large portion of What Is Man? is devoted to explaining training and temperament. When the Young Man asks, "Can't I ever change one of these automatic opinions?" (p. 6), the Old Man replies that exterior influences can do it, that is training. In responding to how a timid man might conquer his cowardice and become brave, the Old Man explains,

> That it shows the value of training in right directions over training in wrong ones. Inestimably valuable is training, influence, education, in right directions--training one's self-approbation to elevate its ideals (p. 9).

One is to train his ideals upward until he finds his chiefest pleasure in conduct which will be beneficial to his neighbors and community. But the Old Man goes on to explain that training is not everything; there is another thing and that is temperament, the disposition a person was born with. "You can't eradicate your disposition nor any rag of it--you can only put pressure on it and keep it down and quiet" (pp. 52-53). And keeping one's temperament "down and quiet" is once again a matter of training. In the end then, man can be trained toward right living, and as the Old Man explains, the only advantage his scheme has over other schemes is that "It has no concealments, no deceptions. When a man leads a right and valuable life under it he is not deceived as to the real chief motive which impels him to it--in those other cases he is" (p. 56). The answer for Twain as to how man can serve other men is

Diligently train your ideals upward and still upward toward a summit where you will find your chiefest pleasure in conduct which, while contenting you, will be sure to confer benefits upon your neighbor and community (p. 59).

END NOTES

[1]DeVoto, In Eruption, p. xx.

[2]Mark Twain, Letter to William Dean Howells in The Portable Mark Twain, ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York, 1966), p. 778.

[3]Bernard DeVoto, Mark Twain at Work (Boston, 1967), p. 116.

[4]Mark Twain: Man and Legend (New York, 1963), p. 242.

[5]In Eruption, p. 239.

[6]Ibid., pp. 241-242.

[7]Alexander E. Jones, "Mark Twain and the Determinism of What is Man?" American Literature, XXIX (March, 1957), 3.

[8]Letter of Sept. 4, 1907, in In Eruption, p. 242.

[9]Jones, "Determinism," p. 3.

[10]Mark Twain, What is Man? and Other Essays (New York, 1917), p. 7. All subsequent references will be annotated parenthetically in the text.

[11]Letters from the Earth, p. 32.

[12]Brooks explains that "Faith never gave the believer more comfort than this philosophy gave Mark Twain . . . . Certainly it could not have afforded Mark Twain any pleasure to feel that he was 'entitled to no personal merit' for what he had done, for what he had achieved in life: the pleasure he felt could have sprung only from the relief his theory afforded him, the relief of feeling he was not responsible for what he failed to achieve--namely his proper development as an artist. He says aloud, 'Shakespeare could not create,' and his inner self adds, 'How in the world, then could I have done so?" Brooks, p. 35.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Throughout his life Mark Twain's religious views were subject to change, not radical change, just a gradual evolution. The evolution of these ideas, however, has not been obvious due to the suppression of some of his more "radical" ideas. Ensor commented on Twain's self-imposed censorship: "At once iconoclast and conformist, Twain sought to shatter the idols of the dominant culture but stood unwilling to be branded idol-shatterer by that culture."[1]

Twain's early training developed in him an extremely sensitive conscience and an idea of a God that was a stern judge rather than a benevolent friend; this concept of the Bible God was one of the idols he sought to shatter. Along with the Bible God, he wanted to destroy concepts of the Bible. Twain simply could not accept the inconsistencies and lack of logic he saw in the Bible. As he said to his friend, Reverend Joseph H. Twichell,

> I don't believe one word of your Bible was inspired by God any more than any other book. I believe it is entirely the work of man from beginning to end--atonement and all. The problem of life and death and eternity and the true conception of God is a bigger thing than is contained in that Book.[2]

This true conception of God is apparently the "real God" of "Reflections on Religion"; certainly it was not the God of the Bible which he rejected. This "genuine God," however, does not seem to be much more appealing than the Bible God, and one wonders if the concept entirely satisfied Twain.

Along with the difficulty of understanding God's relation to man, Twain was also troubled by man's relation to self. In order to live with his guilt, Twain settled for his "gospel" of determinism which freed man from any responsibility. As a determinist, it seems that it would be futile to try to reform human nature, yet the core of his religion did center on man's humanity to man. Twain was a moralist. Howells once wrote:

> I shall not insist here upon Mark Twain as a moralist; though I warn the reader that if he leaves out of the account an indignant sense of right and wrong, a scorn of all affectation and pretense, an ardent hate of meanness and injustice, he will come indefinitely short of knowing Mark Twain.[3]

In spite of Twain's rather stern views of the Calvinistic God, his religious skepticism, and his determinism, he was a moralist because he clung to a ray of hope for "the damned human race."

END NOTES

[1]Ensor, p. 96.

[2]Quoted in Ensor, p. 112.

[3]Howells, p. 141.

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VITA

Sarah Irene Baird

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: MARK TWAIN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE RELIGIOUS CONCEPT OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY IN "REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION," THE "NOTEBOOK," "LETTERS FROM THE EARTH," AND "WHAT IS MAN?"

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Liberal, Kansas, June 29, 1944, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph T. Mires.

Education: Graduated from Hooker High School, Hooker, Oklahoma, in May, 1962; received Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Oklahoma State University in 1966; completed requirements for the Master of Arts degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1972.

Professional Experience: Graduate teaching assistant, Department of English, Oklahoma State University, 1966-68; taught English at Ponca City Senior High School, 1968-72.